

# Inspection of a good school: St James Primary School

Great Charles Street, Brownhills, Walsall, West Midlands WS8 6AE

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Inspection dates: 20 and 21 February 2024

## Outcome

St James Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They share, care and believe in themselves as learners and as individuals. The school is ambitious for its pupils to achieve well. Until recently, pupils' outcomes in national tests have been below the expected standards. However, it is clear from the work pupils are doing in school now; alongside a revamped curriculum and strengthened leadership, rapid improvements have led to current pupils achieving well.

Pupils behave well. This starts with the very youngest children in the early years learning how to play, share and follow instructions. It continues throughout the school. Staff set high expectations and pupils reach these. On the rare occasion, slightly poorer behaviour is seen, staff immediately sort it. Pupils like the structure, the rewards and the circle time where they talk things through and find resolutions to disagreements.

Pupils converse with visitors confidently about their learning across subjects. They also show great maturity in talking about being safe in different situations. It was a privilege to join Year 6 pupils for a discussion on personal development including safety and growing and changing. They appreciate the time staff give them to talk about any niggles or worries. They see the value of their personal, social and health education lessons. A real sense of respect, responsibility and reflection shines through.

## What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has recently joined a new federation. There have been changes of staff; both at teaching and leadership level. Very quickly, leaders have identified the strengths of the school and recognised and retained the unique identity of St. James. They have also got under the skin of various aspects that were not working well. The Lighthouse Federation has brought stability, structure and strength of leadership to the school.

Leaders have tackled the former, weaker aspects of the school head on. A review, followed by improvements to the curriculum promptly helped staff to know what to teach, when and how.

Currently, the curriculum is very full. Pupils learning moves from one thing to the next in swift succession. This leaves little time for reflection and a chance to revisit learning. They are taught many things but do not remember as much of their learning as they should.

One aspect that is spot on in terms of content, sequence and pupils remembering their learning is reading. The school has thought carefully about the training staff have and the support pupils receive. Nothing is left to chance. This attention to detail is paying dividends as an increasing amount of pupils learn to read accurately and fluently. Pupils who need extra support receive it. They steadily move, step by step, to being able to access texts and read for themselves.

Older pupils are impressive in their knowledge of a range of storylines of different books. The extent of their study and the strategies used in class are effective in ensuring that pupils know and recall the story in depth and detail. Pupils grasp the underlying significance of the texts they read. They relate it to current society. The discussions over migrants and refugees, self-preservation and sad endings were incredibly thought-provoking.

The school knows that getting it right from the early years is crucial. Children in Nursery receive clear and precise teaching across all areas. This, nestled alongside caring and positive relationships, help children to settle quickly, and to have the knowledge and confidence to play, explore and experiment with their learning. They continue to build upon this secure start as they move into Reception. Children show that they are independent and interested learners. An increasing number of children are ready for the Year 1 learning that follows. There are some occasions, in the early years and throughout school, where pupils learning is constrained by how writing resources are used within lessons.

The additional needs of pupils are accurately identified and addressed. Staff provide a range of support that ensures pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. The school has very recently opened a specialist resource provision for pupils with complex additional needs. This includes pupils with SEND from St. James and other schools. Although a very new addition to the school, pupils in Sunshine and Moonshine classes within the provision have settled well. Staff are knowledgeable about each pupil. They use this information with skill and sensitivity to support tiny steps of progress.

Pupils are proud of how they help their school. The school is instilling a strong concept of social value and worth in each individual as pupils receive coins for a variety of roles, responsibilities and rewards. Pupils make sensible choices as to whether they wish to spend their coins in the school shop or save them in the school bank.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, the school has focused too much on covering a wide breadth of content at the expense of pupils' depth of knowledge. This means that pupils do not develop a greater depth of understanding over time. The school should further refine the curriculum and prioritise the key content that it wants pupils to learn. This is so that all pupils can secure a deeper understanding and apply their knowledge confidently across different subjects.
- In some subjects, the school's choice of resources, restricts the quantity and quality of what pupils write. It further constrains them from fully sharing what they know and think. The school should ensure that resources linked to subjects are used effectively to extend and challenge pupils' learning.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2018.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

[funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131581
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294562
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	221
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Neil Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Wilson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stjamesprimaryschool.com">www.stjamesprimaryschool.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school provides before- and after-school childcare on site.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school formally joined the Lighthouse Federation on 24 May 2023.
- The school opened a specialist resource provision for pupils with complex needs on 19 February 2024. The provision has 16 places and currently has 15 pupils on roll. The provision caters for pupils of primary-school age.
- The head of school is Claire MacInnes. There is also an executive headteacher, Joanne Wilson, who formally took up her post in May 2023. The executive headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, history and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject

leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also considered early mathematics, geography and science.

- The inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the special educational needs coordinator and other curriculum leaders. The inspector also met with governors, including the chair of the local governing committee and the chief operating officer of the Lighthouse Federation.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff from Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector also spoke with pupils and staff informally during the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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